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ABSTRACT

The role expectations of older female students and younger, less experienced female students were compared in a study. It examined the relationships of demographic, academic, and sex role orientation factors to role expectations expressed by two groups of college women. Participants were 46 women volunteers enrolled in a women's college either at the graduate or undergraduate level--23 freshmen and 23 older and nontraditional students. They completed three instruments: a measure of sex role orientation, a measure of role expectations, and a questionnaire to elicit demographic information. Results of a descriptive discriminative analysis showed that the freshman group responded to the measures in a more stereotypically feminine and other-oriented way, identified with more feminine characteristics, and chose marriage and children over school and career. Additional research was needed to answer the question of whether this observed difference was the result of generational differences, developmental differences, or differences in the groups unrelated to their ages. (Appendixes include a list of 30 references, 2 data tables, and 3 figures.) (YLB)

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Factor's Influencing Women's Role Expectations

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Abstract

Concern about the failure of many intelligent women to fully utilize their talents in the labor force after their schooling has lead investigators to examine the possible causes for this perceived underachievement and hypothesize about related factors. In order to investigate the differential role of such factors in the achievement of college women, 46 women (23 freshmen and 23 older and nontraditional students) volunteered to respond to 3 instruments: (a) a measure of sex role orientation; (b) a measure of role expectations; and (c) a questionnaire to elicit demographic information. Results of a descriptive discriminative analysis indicate that the freshmen group responded to the measures in a more stereotypically feminine and other-oriented way, identifying with more feminine characteristics and choosing marriage and children over school and career (p=.005). Additional research is needed to answer the question of whether this observed difference is a result of generational differences, developmental differences, or differences in the groups unrelated to their ages.

Factors Influencing Women's Role Expectations

On December 4, 1989, the Time magazine cover announced that women in the 1980's tried to have it all, but women facing the 1990's had simply had enough. The cover and article chronicled the uphill battle of the feminist movement to expand job opportunities, salaries, and mind set for females (Wallis, 1989).

Statistics assure us that women are joining the work force with increasing frequency; now 6 out of 10 mothers are employed with women making up 45% of the labor force (National Commission on Working Women, 1986). This percentage is expected to increase, with most women working at some time during their lives. Although the feminist movement has legitimized having a family and a career, it is an economic necessity now for many women. As a result, some females have succumbed to the "superwoman phenomenon" defined by Silverman (1986) as "[women] who attempt to manage full-time, demanding careers while maintaining full responsibility for homemaking and childrearing" (p. 74).

Concurrently, there is recognition of the underachievement of intelligent women expressed as their failure to utilize fully their recognized talents in the labor force after their schooling (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Reis, 1987; Silverman, 1986). Female underachievement after college, defined by Reis (1987) as lack of adult creative production, is a concern for our nation and for all women. Because the United States has a need to increase both quality and productivity in the work force, and many

women need to experience a greater sense of life satisfaction (Hollinger & Fleming, 1988), it is time to determine what factors may be related to college women's expectations and motivations in school and work.

According to Schunk, "outcome expectations and values influence motivation and learning..." (1989, p. 16). Reis (1987) contended that school achievement aside, a woman's success depends on her perception of what she can accomplish. This perception may be affected by what Silverman (1986) describes as a "complex web of role expectations woven into the structure of society" (p. 50). Some of the factors in this web may include time to devote to their work (Reis, 1987); cultural expectations (Bell, 1990); sex role orientation (Bem, 1981a); higher social service than intellectual values (Fox & Turner, 1981); mothers' education and careers (Kahn, 1980); multiple role expectations (Fagg, Brown, Farris, & Rhodes, 1982); confidence in attaining goals (Hollinger & Fleming, 1988); socioeconomic status (Holmes & Esses, 1988); and job motivation and certainty (Stake & Gerner, 1987).

According to Claesson and Brice (1989), men are viewed as being able to integrate all of their roles successfully, but working women are seen as having problems juggling multiple roles. This may be due, in part, to women's tendency to view concerns in terms of interpersonal relationships and responsibilities to others and their problems with putting their needs above those of their loved ones (Gilligan,1982). This tendency was illustrated by Bonar and Koester's finding that women perceived family rewards as outweighing the benefits of maximizing a career (1982).

Burroughs, Turner, and Turner (1984) suggested that the interaction of locus of control, sex-role contingency orientations, and occupational expectations result in the selection of predominantly female occupations by most women, severely limiting their opportunities. However, the degree of confidence in attaining one's goals seems to be a critical variable for young women's career aspirations (Hollinger & Fleming, 1988). This is especially pertinent if women's goals are flexibly tailored to fit the situations of marriage, mobility, and childrearing (Kerr, 1985).

If goals are thus affected, one might expect older female students, who have experienced the multiple demands of meeting their own professional needs and the needs of a family, to have different role expectations than those of younger, less experienced female students. In order to investigate this proposed difference, we examined the relationships of demographic, academic, and sex role orientation factors to role expectations expressed by two groups of college women.

Method

Subjects

Participants in this study included 46 women volunteers currently enrolled in a women's college either at the graduate or undergraduate level. Group I consisted of 23 freshmen, 18-19 years old, enrolled in undergraduate programs. Group II consisted of 17 graduate students in education, and 6 undergraduate students enrolled in a program for older students. The age range for group II was 24-60, with

38 being the median age.

Materials

Participants completed three measures:

1. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1981b) was used to measure the extent to which individuals identified themselves with traditional sex-typed characteristics. The BSRI consists of 60 items; 20 items measuring masculinity, 20 items measuring femininity, and 20 neutral items. The items are personality characteristics previously scaled as stereotypically masculine or feminine, and 20 filler items.

Respondents indicated how well each of the items described themselves by using a seven-point continuum, with seven indicating the highest level of identification with a characteristic. For each scale, masculinity and femininity, the responses to the pertinent items were added. The filler items were not scored. This resulted in scores for each individual on the two separate scales with a possible range of 20-140. Thus, a masculinity score and a femininity score can be computed with the higher values representing greater affiliation with the corresponding sex-typed characteristics.

These scores were then used to classify respondents into one of four groups using a median-split technique. Those high on both masculinity and femininity dimensions would be labeled "androgynous"; those low on both dimensions, "undifferentiated"; and those high on one and low on the other, either "feminine" or "masculine."

Bem (1981b) found estimates of test-retest reliability ranging from .76 to .90 for the

masculinity and femininity scales, whereas the coefficient alpha estimates, representing internal consistency, ranged from .75 to .87 for the two scales. There was no correlation between the two scales.

2. A set of story cues, modeled after those used in Horner's research (1972), was designed to elicit from participants the role expectations which they project onto the characters in the stories. There were four cues which presented some sort of role conflict between education/career and marriage/children (See Appendix). The story cues were timed so that respondents were allowed one minute to look at the cue and four minutes to respond or complete the story.

The story responses were rated on a five-point continuum scale. A rating of one was given for a traditional, selfless response where the conflict was resolved in favor of the other person(s) involved. A rating of three was given for an integrated response that involved compromise in resolving the conflict weighing the need of the central character and those she loves equally. A rating of five was given for a non-traditional response where only the needs of the central character were taken into account. These responses were typically career centered, often eschewing children and/or marriage. Ratings of two and four were given when there was some attempt to consider both sides, but one weighed more heavily in the decision. Ratings were completed independently by the two researchers with an inter-rater reliability of .91.

3. A questionnaire was developed to elicit information on demographics and other

variables determined from the research to impact women's role expectations: age, mother's occupation and level of education, vocational goal, certainty of attaining the goal, perceived importance of the goal, and need for financial security.

Design and Procedure

Each participant completed the three measures in one session, however, the freshmen, older undergraduates, and graduate students were administered the measures in separate groups. The story cues comprised the only timed measure.

Three variables were derived from the BSRI: (a) a classification as androgynous, undifferentiated, feminine, or masculine; (b) a femininity score, the sum of the responses to the 20 feminine items; and (c) a masculinity score, the sum of the responses to the 20 masculine items. The story cues produced one score, a sum of the ratings on the four story cues. Finally, the questionnaire produced 7 variables: college grade point average, vocational goal, certainty of attaining goal, perceived importance of goal, importance of financial security, mother's occupation, and mother's education. The final data set comprised 12 numerical variables: group membership, BSRI classification, femininity, masculinity, response to story cues, G.P.A., mother's occupation, mother's education, vocational goal, certainty of attaining goal, perceived importance of goal, and importance of financial security.

Results

A descriptive discriminant analysis (DDA) (Huberty & Barton, 1989; Huberty & Wisenbaker, in press) was conducted with femininity, masculinity, and score on story cues as criterion variables and group membership as the grouping variable. The SPSS^X DISCRIMINANT procedure yielded a Wilks lambda value of .738, which transformed to an approximate Chi Square = 12.902 (df = 3) with p = .005. This p value along with a multivariate eta-squared value of .262 lead us to conclude that overall group mean differences exist.

By examining the within-groups structure correlations, or structure r's, it can be concluded that the variables femininity and response to story cues were most important to group separation (see Table 1). The freshmen group had higher femininity scores (X = 106.74) than the older group of students (X = 98.26), and lower scores on the story cues (X = 13.35) than the older students (x = 15.09). This indicates that the freshmen responded to the measures in a more stereotypically feminine and other-oriented way, identifying with more feminine characteristics and choosing marriage and children over school and career.

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation matrix was computed for the variables femininity, masculinity, response to story cues, and grade point average. As shown in Table 2 , the only statistically significant correlation was found between femininity and grade point average (r = -.3488, $p \leq .05$), however, this must be interpreted cautiously.

Because the freshmen group had higher femininity scores and lower G.P.A.'s than the older group, classification in school may be an intervening variable.

The seven demographic variables from the questionnaire and the BSRI classification variable were used to more fully describe the two groups. As evidenced in Figure 1, none of the freshmen were classified as undifferentiated; the largest percentage of them were classified as androgynous. Whereas, as demonstrated in Figure 2 the number of members of the older group who were classified as androgynous was the same as the number classified as feminine, and the number classified as undifferentiated was approximately equal to the number classiffied as masculine . Figure 3 illustrates the means of the two groups on each of the 7 demographic variables.

Discussion

The results of this study point out some interesting relationships that bear further investigation. It appears that the two groups may differ in several ways. The clearest differences between the groups were on the variables of femininity and response to story cues. These indicate that the freshmen identified more with the stereotypical feminine characteristics on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and expressed role expectations consistent with this orientation.

The freshmen were more likely than the older students to see themselves as "affectionate", "compassionate", "gentle", "sympathetic", and "warm"--terms from the feminine scale of the BSRI (Bem, 1981b). They were also more likely to choose

marriage, children, and family life over scholarships and promotions as completions to the story cues. Perhaps the construct that is most important here is an orientation toward others. This orientation has traditionally been associated with femininity in this country. In fact, meeting the needs of others has been called a central factor, an organizing principle in the lives of women (Miller, 1986). Accordingly, Metha, Kinnier, and McWhiter (1989) found that family continues to be a top priority for women.

More recently this orientation has been seen as a hindrance to females' accomplishments. Kerr (1985) suggested that women's patterns of adjustment, most notably their accomodations to the others in their lives, may be the foundation for female underachievement. Steward (1983) proposed that models of achievement for women are more compatible with an androgynous orientation. However, this is a value judgement. By whose terms do we define achievement? Perhaps, as Gilligan (1982) proposes, the highest level of moral development for the female is integrating her own needs with the needs of those for whom she cares.

A more viable concern may be the life satisfaction of women. Pretromonaco, Monir, and Frohardt-Lane (1986) found that it was psychologically beneficial for working women to have multiple roles. They suggested that multiple roles increase women's sense of competence and promote a more complex view of the self. Likewise, Helson, Elliot, and Leigh (1990) found that more than the number of roles, the quality of roles as assessed by marital satisfaction and status in work was associated with

contentment and effective functioning.

In this regard we may have some concern for freshmen women who may be naive about the complexities of combining competing goals. Although 86% of the women in Whisler and Eklund's (1986) study indicated that they were anxious to achieve beyond the role of homemaker, they did not reject the roles of wife and mother. However, Affleck, Morgan, and Hayes (1989) concluded that the college students in their study demonstrated a lack of awareness of the complexity of combining family and career.

Why would the freshmen in this study express a more traditionally feminine orientation than the older women? One might expect the younger women, whose mothers were more educated and more often had careers themselves, to have a stronger school/career orientation. Kahn (1980) found that the example of the mother's life persuades the daughter that marriage and career are compatible, or that a choice must be made. Their mothers' experiences may have persuaded them that combining career and family is possible. The older women's personal experiences may have persuaded more of them that it is not easy.

Other factors may account for these differences between the groups of women. Perhaps it is only the very goal-oriented women who return to college after marriage and a family to complete a degree. There may be a critical time when women make these choices, and we're looking at groups on opposite sides of the choice. A longitudinal study to follow a group of freshmen women for several years would inform this line of inquiry.

More extensive research on these issues needs to be conducted in order to examine whether there truly are generational differences in women's goal expectations, or whether there are differences that can be attributed to experience. Whether these differences would hold true for women in different regions of the country, from different racial/ethnic groups, or from different socio-economic backgrounds is uncertain. However, these preliminary findings may spark an interest in conducting more research into these issues. Particularly of interest may be an investigation of the reasons for individuals' choices, specifically, whether young women may appear less career-oriented because of their well-thought internalized values, the negative examples of their own career-oriented mothers, or naiveté.

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Appendix

Story Cues

1. Nan, who has just graduated with honors, is offered a job in another city, a graduate assistantship to continue her studies. She also receives a proposal of marriage from the man she loves who wants to have a family right away.

2. Anna, who is completing her senior year in high school near the top of her class, receives several scholarship offers, but her steady boyfriend of three years is ready to marry.

3. Becky, 35, receives a big promotion which entails quite a lot of traveling.

4. Jane, who married between terms her junior year in college, discovers during the summer before her senior year that she is pregnant.

Table 1

Within-Group Structure Correlations for Descriptive Discriminant Analysis

Criterion Variables	Structure r's
Femininity	.614
Story	-.604
Masculinity	.219

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients

	Masculinity	G.P.A.	Story Cues
Femininity	.038	-.348*	-.012
Masculinity	.	-.019	.181
G.P.A.			.267

$p \leq .05$

Figure 1

BSRI Categories for Freshmen

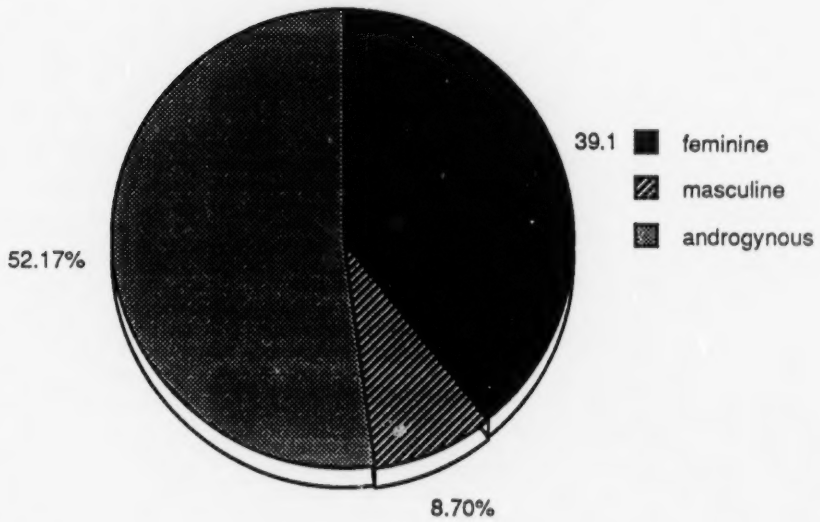

Figure 2

BSRI Categories for Older and Nontraditional Students

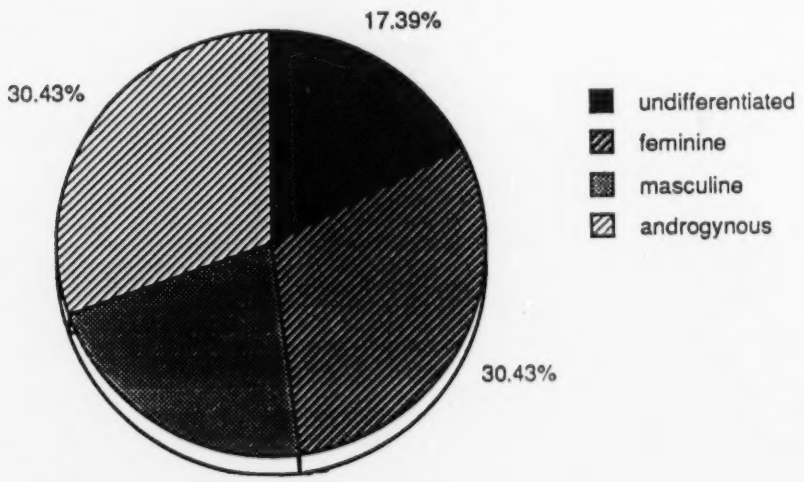

Figure 3

Means by Group on Demographic Variables